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ABSTRACT

The center provides an opportunity for elementary education majors to take some of their professional education courses in public school settings. After a three-week orientation period, students spend three consecutive days each week throughout the semester within the public school. Major objectives of the center are (1) to integrate theory with the act of teaching; (2) to achieve a cooperative approach to teacher education among the students, teachers, and the university; and (3) to obtain more meaningful evidence of professional growth and performance of education students. About 30 education students are enrolled in the center each semester. Other personnel include principals and staff of three public elementary schools and five university professors from the School of Education. Coordination is stressed, with courses including reading, language arts, science, social studies methods, tests and measurements, and educational psychology. Students also enroll in a "special work" course which enables them to explore aspects of classroom work unique to their particular unit or grade level assignments. Evaluation efforts include direct observation and supervision and the use of videotape cameras and recorders for feedback assessment. (Author/LBH)

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ELEMENTARY PRE-STUDENT TEACHING CENTER:

A CASE STUDY

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ELEMENTARY PRE-STUDENT TEACHING CENTER

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-STEVENS POINT

SUMMARY

The Pre-Student Teaching Center provides an opportunity for Elementary Education majors to take some of their professional education courses in public school settings. Students enroll in the Center during one semester of their junior or senior year, prior to student teaching or interning. After an initial three week on-campus orientation period, the students spend three consecutive days each week throughout the remainder of the semester in an area public elementary school observing and working with the children, teachers and university professors. Two days per week are spend on campus for course work and seminars.

The major objectives of the Center are to integrate the theory of teaching with the act of teaching, to achieve a cooperative approach to teacher education among the students, teachers, and the university, and to obtain more meaningful evidence of professional growth and performance of education students.

Approximately thirty education students are enrolled in the Center each semester. Other personnel includes principals and staff of three public elementary schools in Stevens Point and five university professors from the School of Education, including a program coordinator.

The experiences the practicum students participate in are coordinated directly with the university courses in which they

are enrolled. Courses presented included are reading, language arts, science, and social studies methods, tests and measurements, and educational psychology. In addition, students enroll in a "Special Work" course which enables them to explore aspects of classroom work unique to their particular unit or grade level assignments.

Course content and learning experiences are evaluated continually through cooperative planning and assessment. In addition to direct observation and supervision, video tape cameras and recorders are used to enable the students and faculty to obtain feedback relative to performance and professional growth.

The Center is one element of a series of planned practicum experiences which provide for early, direct contact with schools and children throughout the teacher preparation program.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Elementary Pre-Student Teaching Center: A Case Study. 1

Description and development of the program 1

Objectives 2

Personnel involved 2

Budget 2

Contributions to the improvement of teacher education. 3

Evaluation 4

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-STEVENS POINT
ELEMENTARY PRE-STUDENT TEACHING CENTER:
A CASE STUDY

DESCRIPTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE ELEMENTARY PRE-STUDENT TEACHING CENTER

The Elementary Pre-Student Teaching Center provides professional education courses in public school settings. The program is now in its sixth semester and has undergone continued revision.

During their junior or senior year, students enrolled in this program spend the first three weeks of the semester on campus becoming oriented to the course work and to the Center Program. After the initial on-campus period, the students spend three consecutive teaching days each week throughout the remainder of the semester in an area public elementary school observing and working with the children and teachers. Two days per week are spent on campus for course work and seminars with a team of university faculty members. The experiences the practicum students observe and participate in are coordinated directly with the university courses being taken. Courses presently included are techniques in reading, language arts, science, social studies and a course in tests and measurements and one course in educational psychology. Students are given the opportunity to enroll in an additional course, "Special Work," which allows them to explore the aspects of classroom work unique to their particular unit or grade level assignment.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives for the practicum students enrolled in the Center:

1. To integrate the theory of teaching with the act of teaching.
2. To develop skills and educational concepts through an experience based program.
3. To gain a working knowledge of and to become involved in various phases of public school experience.

The objectives in terms of the teacher preparation program:

1. To achieve a cooperative approach to teacher education among the students, classroom teachers, and the university.
2. To obtain more meaningful evidence of professional growth and performance of education students.
3. To provide a model for a performance-based teacher education program, involving performing in a real classroom setting.

PERSONNEL INVOLVED

The personnel involved includes administrators and staff of three elementary schools, approximately thirty-five elementary education majors each semester, and five university professors from the School of Education including a program coordinator.

BUDGET

The Pre-Student Teaching Center is funded under the auspices

of the regular School of Education budget. The regular funding covers salaries of university staff, materials and supplies, and travel in the local community. In the initial phase of the Center program a special grant was received for purchasing video cameras, recorders, and tapes. This grant was in the amount of $8,000.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF TEACHER EDUCATION

The Pre-Student Teaching Center provides for improved pre-service education through more frequent and coordinated involvement in public school programs. In addition to working directly with children and classroom teacher, the practicum students become involved in faculty meetings, parent conferences and school unit meetings. The Center program provides an additional avenue of communication between the university and the public schools.

The Center approach helps avoid over-lap and redundancy in course work and provides reinforcement in course content, objectives and learning experiences. Another benefit noted is that as changes have been made in Center courses, instructors teaching both an on-campus and a Center section of the same course report that they have incorporated some of the Center course modification in their on-campus courses.

The Center model provides an opportunity for student decision-making in terms of the levels at which they would like to work and whether or not teaching is really the career they wish to pursue. The Center is one segment of planned field experiences which provide for early direct contact with

schools and children throughout the teacher preparation program.

Weekly classroom visits by university instructors help them to keep informed about the continual changes occurring in the public school curricula and promotes the use of current, realistic examples and experiences in their methods courses.

EVALUATION

An important dimension of the Center program is the use of video tape cameras and recorders which enable the practicum students and the faculty to obtain feedback information relative to classroom performance and professional growth. Additional feedback is obtained through weekly seminars for practicum students from each of the three participating schools and joint planning and evaluation conferences between students, public school staff and university faculty. Course content and learning experiences are continually evaluated through cooperative planning.

The Center project is presently being evaluated in several additional ways: (1) Both informal and regularly scheduled evaluation sessions between the following groups and combination of groups have been and continue to be held--practicum students, university faculty, classroom teachers, building principals, members of the student teaching staff and placement officers. (2) Each semester the faculty has collected open-ended evaluation statements from the practicum students enrolled in the Center program. (3) One participating building principal has developed a rating scale designed to

determine the reactions and attitudes of practicum students and classroom teachers. (4) An informal survey has been conducted by the Center coordinator when students apply for the Center program. When asked what helped them to decide to take the Center program route, a majority stated that it had been recommended to them by former Center program students. (5) Test and measurement instructors and members of the Data Processing Center are currently considering all possible data available in the university's computer data bank about both center students and on-campus students who are taking the same courses during the same period of time. An attempt is being made to identify possible differences between the Center students and the on-campus students. Questions that are being asked include: What kinds of students select each kind of program? What factors influence the students' selection? What are the identifiable program differences? What are some identifiable outcomes? Are there existing differences in grades received in student teaching? Are there any outstanding differences or trends to be detected in the essay comments made by cooperating teachers during the student teaching assessments? What differences, if any, do cooperating teachers and university supervisors see in readiness to assume responsibility in the initial student teaching experience?

With increased emphasis on accountability and the need for earlier and continual contact with children in real classroom situations, the Center program is one means of providing

potential benefits for pre-service students in preparing for and assuming the role and responsibilities of an elementary classroom teacher.